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The 30th Ode of Solomon as the oldest example of the great Syriac poetry and the development of Syriac prosody

The famous collection of the Odes of Solomon consisted originally of 42 psalms. Unfortunately, their full version has survived in none of the four extant manuscripts, i.e., two Syriac, one Greek and one Coptic. Ode 2 is still missing as well as the beginning of Ode 3 and probably the passages of Ode 1, which is known only in the Coptic version.

Original Language and Date of Composition of the Odes of Solomon

They are believed to have originated in either Antioch or Edessa and were, according to what is being agreed upon by many scholars, written originally in Syriac. The evidence for this is very strong and is based on what has been called "the attractive quality of the extant Syriac."¹ All scholars believe the Odes to be Christian and even to be the "earliest Christian hymn-book."² Most

¹ "Most importantly the attractive quality of the extant Syriac is indicative that Syriac is probably the original language. Of special note is the play on words possible only in Syriac [...] and the pervasive assonance, metrical scheme, and rhythm in the Syriac. Also numerous variants between extant versions are frequently explained by the assumption of a Syriac tradition of transmission" (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2: *Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, ed. by J. H. Charlesworth, New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland 1985, p. 726). Cf. *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, re-edited for the Governors of the John Rylands Library by Rendel Harris and Alphonse Mingana, vol. 2: *The Translation. With Introduction and Notes*, Manchester-London-New York-Bombay-Calcutta-Madras 1920, pp. 61–69, 91–105.

² The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 725.

scholars also agree that the Odes were probably composed sometime around A. D. 100, i.e., at the turn of the 1st century A.D.³

The Odes could be perceived as the earliest known substantial piece of Syriac literature, preceding the text of the Peshitta, which probably originated in the 2nd century A. D. At least two fragments of our collection (Odes 7:10 and 9:8f.) are apparently based on the Septuagint used at that time even in Judeo-Christian communities.⁴ We know that the Syriac-speaking church used the Peshitta, which was translated from the Hebrew independently of the Septuagint. If the original language of the Odes is Syriac, and the Biblical references indicate the Greek text of the Bible as a basis, we incline to the view that the text of the Odes predates the Peshitta. If it weren't so, we would expect to find references to the Syriac version of the Old Testament.

James H. Charlesworth refuses to accept the Gnosticity of the Odes: "intensive research on this document [manuscript N – PWT] convinced many scholars that the Odes are not gnostic but a collection of very early Christian hymns. [...] In the line with the consensus that these Odes are Christian is the observation that the key characteristic in these hymns is a joyous tone of thanksgiving for the advent of the Messiah who had been promised [...] and for the present experience of eternal life and love from and for the Beloved."⁷

The author of these hymns of praise and devotion, known as the Odist, was most probably Judeo-Christian, or a Jewish convert to Christianity, who knew the Thanksgiving Hymns of the Qumran Community and believed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.⁸

³ "The extensive and pervasive parallels with the Qumran Hodayoth, the undeniable similarities with the ideas found in the Gospel of John that cannot be explained away by either the hypothesis that they are dependent upon John or that John depends upon them, and the possibility that Ignatius of Antioch may have known and even quoted from cumulatively indicate that the Odes were probably composed sometimes around A. D. 100" (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 727).

⁴ The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 726.

⁵ *The Odes of Solomon*, edited with translation and notes by J. H. Charlesworth, Oxford 1973, pp. 41, 42.

⁶ Cf. K. Rudolph, *Gnoza. Istota i historia późnoantycznej formacji religijnej* [*Gnosis. The Nature and History of Gnosticism*], przeł. G. Sowiński, Kraków 1995, pp. 116–118.

⁷ The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 725.

⁸ Ibid.

Text of Ode 30 and its structure

I have chosen Ode 30 to illustrate some distinguishing prosodic characteristics of this literary genre. The following text is a copy of a facsimile of the manuscript attached to the Rendel Harris and Alfonse Mingana edition.⁹ The manuscript, known as manuscript H, although it comes from the fifteenth century, is a good copy of a text coming from the reliable source. If we compare the badly preserved manuscript N, almost five centuries older than manuscript H, we'll find no variants in the text of Ode 30.¹⁰ Our copy was made in *'estrangelā* script.¹¹

```
וכביולא הללאב
الحنامة الحنية محمعة مع محمة مراجع ا
                 aft indedu Los
     المناهجة معفه مدة و معلة فلاه 2
         האולונייוה של הבהשה וביואה.
                 Java an institutes 3
                         ocun ierza.
     4 הן וביצא געו מגר במעבע ההחת.
   مختزمهم ورحمة ملم محم محمفسهم لم
         5 حيلا احر مقدمهم احزمهم نعم
                הר לבת ומיצא שרמי.
    השאש הלם תאמשש הל זב האהרם 6
 השובא גאוליתכ כדי שלא לא יוביחת.
       men ander 1 report anonal 7
                      האממייים בשי
                            millo.
```

zammir<u>t</u>ā <u>dt</u>lā<u>t</u>īn 1 mlaw l<u>k</u>on mayyā men mabboʻā hayyā <u>d</u>māryā mettul de<u>tptah lkon.</u> 2 w<u>t</u>aw kul<u>kon shayyā wsab</u> maštyā wettnīh `al mabboj`eh dmāryā. 3 mettul dšappīrū wanqe<u>d</u> wamnīh napšā.

⁹ *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, re-edited by R. Harris and A. Mingana, vol. 1: *The Text. With facsimile reproductions*, Manchester-London-New York-Bombay-Calcutta-Madras 1916, pp. *23a–*23b. The pages contain written *in extenso* texts of Odes 29:10–30:6 and 30:6–31:6, respectively.

¹⁰ The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, op. cit., vol. 1, p. , *The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 6–8, 12–13. "It is surprising that there are no variants between Syriac manuscripts in this Ode" (*The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., p. 115).

¹¹ Although the text of manuscript H is preserved in the *sertō* script, it contains mainly the oldest diacritic marks (used in non-vocalized texts). There are to be found also some vocalic signs typical for the East-Syriac system of writing.

4 men de<u>b</u>šā gēr saggī <u>b</u>assīmīn maw w<u>k</u>akkārī<u>t</u>ā <u>d</u>debburyā<u>t</u>ā lā me<u>t</u>paḥḥmā leh. 5 meṭṭul dmen sepwā<u>t</u>eh dmāryā npaq wmen lebbeh dmāryā šammah. 6 we<u>t</u>ā <u>k</u>ad lā mestayya<u>k</u> wlā me<u>t</u>ḥze wa <u>`d</u>ammā <u>det</u>īhe<u>b</u> bamṣa <u>`t</u>ā lā yad `ū. 7 ṭūbayhon laylēn deštīw menneh wettnīħ beh.

hallelūya.

The metrical analysis of the structure of Ode 30 gives us the following results:

¹ _ , , , , , , ,	5 [12]
	2 [5]
2	3 [8]
	3 [8]
3 _ , _ , _ ,	3 [7]
	2 [4]
4 / / /	3 [10]
	3 [13]
5 _ / _ / _ / /	3 [9]
	3 [7]
6 _ , _ , _ ,	3 [10]
	4 [12]
7 , ,	3 [9]
<u> </u>	1 [3]
′	1 [4]

Although there are no regular metrical measures to be found in the Odes, the majority of the verses has a metrical pattern which is based on three ictuses per half-verse (hemistich) = 3+3. The verses are not isosyllabic. The unsteady syllabic arrangement gives lines (hemistiches) of 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and even 13 syllables. "The Aramaeo-Hebraic parallelism is represented in the Odes from beginning to end with all its subdivisions."¹²

In my translation I tried to elucidate the meaning of the Ode, avoiding, if possible, the traditional imitation of the word order of the original text:¹³

¹² The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 129.

¹³ Cf. my Polish version of the text translated from Syriac (P. W. Turek, *Od Gilgamesza do kasydy. Poezja semicka w oryginale i w przekładzie [From Gilgamesh to Qasida. Semitic Poetry in Original Version and in Translation*], Kraków 2010, pp. 205–206):

[&]quot;1. Zaczerpnijcie wody z żywego źródła Pana,

gdyż dla was je otwarto.

^{2.} Przyjdźcie, napijcie się, wszyscy spragnieni,

i spocznijcie u źródła Pana.

"Draw¹⁴ some water¹⁵ from the living spring¹⁶ of the Lord,

4. Doprawdy woda jego słodsza jest od miodu,

nie zrówna jej plaster pszczeli.

5. Wyszła bowiem z ust Pana

i z serca Pana wzięła imię.

6. Zjawiło się bez ograniczeń, niewidzialne;

nie poznano go, póki nie znalazło się w środku.

7. Błogosławieni, którzy napili się z niego

i w nim znaleźli orzeźwienie.

Alleluja."

¹⁴ means "to fill up" (*Thesaurus Syriacus*, collegerunt S. M. Quatremere, G. H. Bernstein, G. W. Lorsbach, A. J. Arnoldi, C. M. Agrell, F. Field, A. Roediger, auxit, digessit, exposuit, edidit R. Payne Smith, vol. 2, Oxonii 1901, pp. 2117-2118; The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 366), but also "to draw water; to pour in" et al. (M. Sokoloff, A Svriac *Lexicon*, a translation from the Latin, correction, exspansion, and update of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum, Winona Lake-Piscataway 2009, pp. 768–769). This word is an equivalent of Hebrew אָשָאָב šā'ab – to draw water (L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. J. Stamm, Wielki słownik hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski Starego Testamentu, vol. 1: Slownik hebrajsko-polski y-8, vol. 2: Słownik hebrajsko-polski n-5. Słownik aramejsko-polski, red. nauk. wyd. pol. P. Dec, Warszawa 2008, vol. 2, p. 383) and Greek $\dot{\alpha}v\tau\lambda\dot{\epsilon}\omega$ – to draw (water) (Benselers Griechischdeutsches Schulwörterbuch zu Homer, Herodot, Aeschvlos, Sophokles, Euripides, Thukvdides, Xenophon, Platon, Lysias, Isokrates, Demosthenes, Plutarch, Arrian, Lukian, Theokrit, Bion, Moschos, den Lyrikern, dem Wilamowitzschen Lesebuche sowie zu dem Neuen Testamente, soweit sie in den Schulen gelesen werden, zwölfte, erweiterte und vielfach verbesserte Auflage bearbeitet von A. Kaegi, Leipzig-Berlin 1904, p. 80) in Syriac version of Isaiah 12:3 ماهىخچە، مىتا wtemlūn mayyā (1988 [, محط وربعا من محل وربيما حكيما من المراجة (, 1988 معط وربيما حكيما من المراجة (, وربيما مع الم úš^o'a<u>b</u>tem-mayim (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, quae antea cooperantibus A. Alt, O. Eißfeldt, P. Kahle ediderat R. Kittel, editio funditus renovata adiuvantibus H. Bardtke, W. Baumgartner, P. A. H. de Boer, O. Eißfeldt, J. Fichtner, G. Gerleman, J. Hempel, F. Horst, A. Jepsen, F. Maass, R. Meyer, G. Quell, Th. H. Robinson, D. W. Thomas, cooperantibus H. P. Rüdiger et J. Ziegler, ediderunt K. Elliger et W. Rudolph, textum Masoreticum curavit H. P. Rüdiger, Masoram elaboravit G. E. Weil, editio quinta emendata opera A. Schenker, Stutgart 1997, p. 693), and Greek και ἀντλήσετε ὕδωρ (Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, edidit A. Rahlfs, Stuttgart 1979, vol. 2, p. 582), as well as Syriac version of the Gospel of John 4:7 ما ط معبعا, <u>dt</u>emlē mayyā (ما ط معبعا, op. cit., part III, p. 122), cf. Greek ἀντλῆσαι ὕδωρ (The Greek New Testament, ed. by K. Aland, M. Black, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger, A. Wikgren, in cooperation with the Institute for the New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia under the direction of K. Aland, B. Aland, Third Edition (Corrected), Stuttgart 1984, p. 333). All those examples point to the Syrian (Aramaic) origin of this verse (The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 366).

¹⁵ mayyā plurale tantum "water" could also be translated metaphorically as "knowledge, wisdom of the Lord" (*The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 368; *The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., p. 114).

¹⁶ I prefer the usage of the word "spring" instead of "fountain" used by Harris and Mingana, and Charlesworth (*The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 368; *The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., p. 114)

^{3.} Dobre jest bowiem i czyste,

dające orzeźwienie.

Because it has been opened for yourselves.¹⁷ Come, all you thirsty, have a drink,¹⁸ And rest by the spring of the Lord. For it is beautiful and clear, And it is giving rest to the soul.¹⁹ Indeed, its water is much sweeter than honey, And the honeycomb shall not be compared with it.²⁰ Because it has flowed²¹ from the lips of the Lord, And has taken its name²² from the heart of the Lord.

¹⁷ According to Charlesworth plural imperative and pronoun (2nd masculine plural) appear to be the evidence of the usage in public worship (*The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., p. 114).

¹⁸ مَح مُحك *ab maštyā*, literally "take a drink".

¹⁹ محسد تعال *mnīh napšā*, literally "placating, assuaging the soul". تعال *napšā* f. "soul, person, self", can also be translated as "the breath of life, life-force, essence, nature" (*Lexicon Syriacum* auctore Carolo Brockelmann. Editio secunda aucta et emendata, Halis Saxonum 1928, p. 419; L. Costaz, *Dictionnaire syriaque-français. Syriac-English Dictionary*, Beyrouth 1963, p. 210; *The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., p. 114).

²⁰ According to Harris and Mingana this reference to Psalm 19:11 didn't follow the Peshitta version but the Hebrew original: ומָתוּקִים מִדְבֹשׁ וְנוֹפָת צוּפֹים מוּשׁלּעמוּ *ûmatûqîm middabaš wanōpet sûpîm* - sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb (The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments. Translated out of the Original Tongues and with Former Translations diligently compared. Authorized (King James) Version. Self-pronouncing Reference Edition. Made for The Gideons by The National Bible Press, Philadelphia 1953, p. 624 OT – in English tradition verse 10), literally "and sweeter than honey and clear (natural) honey from the honeycombs" (L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. J. Stamm, Wielki słownik hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski Starego Testamentu, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 202, 615, 670, vol. 2, p. 91; The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 367). The author of the Ode might have been interpreting Hebrew matoq a control matoq - sweet as "pleasant" (Ibid.), that's why we find in the Ode the plural of Syriac صعيد bassīm – pleasant, nice. outer of series on the Syriac version we read namely: השבא היאסו כאבן האבו היאסו כאבן האבא היא היאסו ואיז איז היאסו האבא היאסו האבא היאסו היאסו האבא היאסו ونحسوم] والمعالي Biblia Syriaca 1988: I, 398) whalin men dabšā wkakkārītā – sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, Harris and Mingana (ut supra) have suggested also another possible source – Sirach 24:20 τὸ γὰρ μνημόσυνόν μου ὑπερ τὸ μέλι γλυκύ καὶ ἡ κληρονομία μου ὑπερ μέλιτος κηρίον (Septuaginta, op. cit., vol. 2, 418). "You will remember me as sweeter than honey, better to have than the honeycomb" (The New American Bible. Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources by Members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America. Sponsored by the Bishops' Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Catholic Bible Publishers, Wichita, Kansas 1978–1979, p. 687 – in English tradition verse 19).

²¹ In the manuscript we find the form نص (*The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 1, photocopy of the manuscript 30:1–6), usually vocalized as نقد *nāpeq (The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 1, p.), i.e. active participle masculine singular. Charlesworth suggested the reading نقم *nīpaq*, i.e., 3rd person singular perfect (*The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., p. 115).

²² In the manuscript we find the form (The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, op. cit., vol. 1, photocopy of the manuscript 30:1–6), usually vocalized as <math>is meh - its name (*The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 1, p.). Because this meaning is out of the context, the editors suggested the form is sep eh - its overflow (*The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 367; *Thesaurus Syriacus*, op. cit., p. 4271). However, both manuscripts (H and N) clearly have the form is sep is hard's why Charlesworth changed the reading to <math>is sammah, i.e.

It came unlimited and invisible;

It was not recognized, until it was set in the middle.²³

Blessed are they who have drunk from it

And have found rest by its side.

Hallelujah."

In comparison with the classical poetry of St. Ephrem the Odes of Solomon exemplify the early period of development of Syriac poetry: instead of isosyllabic verses we have heterosyllabic rhythmical units. Thus we even dare say that they represent the oldest known collection of Syriac poetry.

Bardaisan – the inventor of the isosyllabic pattern?

There is a large gap of at least two centuries between the time of the composition of the Odes of Solomon and the period of poetical activity of St. Ephrem (ca. 306–373). Is it possible to determine the appearance of the isosyllabic model in Syriac poetry? In order to answer this question, I will examine various available sources.

The first hymnologist of the Syrians, according to some scholars, was the celebrated Gnostic Bardaisan (155–222).²⁴ He must have been a skillful and productive poet because his influence was seen as a threat to the Orthodox

²⁴ G. Phillips, *Syriac Grammar*, 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged, Cambridge 1866, p. 190; W. Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, London 1894, pp. 28–30; *A Select Library of the Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series Translated Into English With Prolegomena And Explanatory Notes. Second series*, translated into English with prolegomena and explanatory notes by H. Wace and P. Schaffin connection with a number of patristic scholars of Europe and America, vol. 3: Theodoret, Jerome, Gennadius, Rufinus. Historical Writings, Grand Rapids 1969, p. 129.

^{3&}lt;sup>rd</sup> masculine singular perfect Pa because parallelism suggests that we need a verb (*The Odes of Solomon*, op. cit., p. 115).

²³ The Odist's predilection for *double entendre* suggests that he was also thinking about the incarnation; it is possible to translate this line as follows, "And until He was set in the middle they knew Him not" (The Odes of Solomon, op. cit., p. 115). A possible (obvious, according to the authors) parallel to the Gospel of John 1:10, cf. The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 311. The Greek original of the verse of the Gospel reads as follows: ἐν τῷ κόσμω ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω (The Greek New Testament, ed. by K. Aland, M. Black, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger, and A. Wikgren, in cooperation with the Institute for the New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia under the direction of K. Aland and B. Aland, 3rd ed. (corrected), Stuttgart 1984, p. 321), i.e., "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (The Holy Bible, op. cit., p. 109 مكحكط ممال مخطط خليره ممال مخطر عند (or analogy is even more striking in the Syriac version) منحط ا لا تبخص (Biblia Syriaca, op. cit., III, 117) b'ālmā wā. w ʿālmā bīdeh hwā. w ʿālmā lā yad ʿeh (the same meaning as above). Many scholars agree that the Gospel of John was probably completed by ca. A. D. 90 (The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary, editor-in-chief D. N. Friedman, associate editor A. C. Myers, managing editor A. B. Beck, Grand Rapids-Cambridge 2000, p. 724). The above mentioned parallel would establish the date of possible composition of the Odes more firmly.

faith. His abilities were described by St. Ephrem in his 55th homily of *Against Heresies Sermons*:²⁵

مُكْم بِحَنَّتُنَى • هَبْ حَصْمَ عَمَدَه • حَمَّ عُمَ هَجَى حَمَى حَمَّى حَمَّنَكُمُا • هَزَقِت رَحْمَةُمُا • مَانَكُ مُعَمَّدُمُا • حَمَّلاً مَحْمَقُلاً • قَحْى حَتُّم قُلاً • مَامَةً حَمَّى مَعْتَقًا • مَعْتَمُا بَحَافَه حَمَّا • لَا حَجّه بِمُحَطَدًا . • حَبَّه بِيلاً بَسُه، • حقوقَه بَن لَجَم • حبَّوهمه بَنْمَعَكُم . • هُلا متعقب زَمْت • أَهَدُه رَحْمَةُماً • عَنَّوْه عَجَت أَنَّه • مَحْبً حصَّنَه • لَا حُبَ رَحْبَة بَعْت أَ

hālēn dbardaysān | mallel bpetgāmaw | gbal gēr madrāšē | wamzag bqīnātā | wrakkeb zmīrātā²⁶ | waʿʿel mušhātā | bkāylē wmatqālē | palleg bnāt qālē | wasrah ltammīmē | mrārē bhalyūtā | krīhē dmēkultā | lā gbāw dhulmānā. | bdawīd sbā danhūr | bšupreh dnestabat | bdumyeh dnetqalas. mā whamšīn rakkeb | `aphū zmīrātā | šrāreh šbaq `ahay | wmarrī bmenyāneh | lā gēr zmar dawīd |zāmrā dkāpūrē | dkennārhūn šuqraw.²⁷

"As for Bardaisan, he used to deliver his speech so: he created the hymns, adapting them for tunes, and composed psalms, putting in them rhythms. He divided all the words into measures and meters. He provided simpletons with bitter things mixed with sweetness, so that the things unfit for consumption weren't separated from the healthy ones. He admired David and craved his renown desiring to be praised the same way that one has been praised. He composed hundred fifty psalms, as did before David, but he refused their truth, oh my brothers, keeping only their number. Because David, composing the psalms, didn't eulogize the apostates, whose harp served the lie".

²⁷ This sermon was written by St. Ephrem in the pentasyllabic meter. It was most probably introduced by Bardaisan, although this pattern is traditionally associated with the name of Balai (شخنه خدنه *mār bālay*), flourishing in the 5th century (*Institutiones fundamentales linguae Aramaicae*, op. cit., p. 131; T. Arayathinal, *Aramaic Grammar*, vol. 2, Mannanam 1959, p. 392; S. Brock, *An Introduction to Syriac Studies*, [in:] *Horizons in Semitic Studies. Articles for the Student*, ed. by J. H. Eaton, Birmingham 1980, p. 6). My Polish translation of the text keeps the isosyllabic pattern of that fragment but I have chosen the octosyllabic meter because the Polish version written in pentasyllabic would be too dense to be understood: "Co się tyczy Bardajsana, | tak wygłaszał swe maksymy; | tworzył mianowicie pieśni, | adaptując do melodii, | oraz komponował psalmy, | wprowadzając do nich rytmy. | Na miary oraz na metra | podzielił był wszystkie słowa. | On to dostarczył prostaczkom | rzeczy gorzkie ze słodyczą, | a niezdatnych do spożycia | nie oddzielono od zdrowych. | Szacunkiem darzył Dawida, | sławy jego pożądając, | by podobnie go chwalono" (P. W. Turek, *Od Gilgamesza do kasydy*, op. cit., p. 208).

²⁵ Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri opera omnia quae exstant Graece, Syriace, Latine, in sex tomos distributa, Syriacum textum recensuit Petrus Benedictus Societatis Jesu, notis vocalibus animavit, latine vertit, & variorum scholijs locupletavit, vol. 1, Romae 1737, pp. 553–554.

²⁶ بِتِنَار ٱمَتِرَا اللَّهِ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ اللَّهُ تَعَيَّلُ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ مَعْتَقَانُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ ال et تَعْتَلُ اللَّهُ اللَّ in usum juventutis academicae, editae a D. Hermanno Zschokke linguarum Semiticarum nec non biblicae veteris foederis exegeseos sublimioris in Universitats Vindobonensis facultate theologica c. e. professore publico, c. r. capellano aulico et Societatis Germano-Orientalis Lipsiae membro etc., Vindobonae 1870, p. 130).

Regardless of the critical tone of the text, St. Ephrem left us crucial information concerning the artistic work of Bardaisan. He composed hymns, songs and psalms following a specific pattern and meter. Though nearly all his works have perished, we can attribute the authorship of at least a few quotations to Bardaisan, preserved in the writings of Theodor Bar Koni (the 8th century).

I quote as an example the two following lines:²⁸

: المصل المحل المحل محل من المحل المصل : المحل محمد من محمد المحمد أ e<u>t</u>paṣḥaṯ `ā`ar b̄gawwāh | wahwā šelyā wnawḥā

weštabbah māryā <u>bhekmt</u>eh wselqa<u>t</u> tawdī<u>t</u>ā lahnāneh.

"The air rejoiced in it, and there was quietness and serenity.

The Lord was glorified in his wisdom, and thanks were given for his mercy."²⁹ Here is the metrical pattern of that stanza:

 $\begin{array}{c} \underline{} \underline{}$

The lines are not isosyllabic, there is a caesura in each line, and the metrical pattern is based on three ictuses per half-verse (hemistich) 3+3. The peculiarity of the Bardaisan's verse would consist of the regularity of caesura and the fixed number of ictuses. His poetical works would, therefore, represent a transitional period from the heterosyllabic pattern based on the almost fixed number of ictuses to the regular isosyllabic verse, represented by the works of St. Ephrem.

Kathleen E. Mcvey, reviewing the arguments of Beck concerning the Bardaisan's method of composing *didactic songs* (idactic songs), argues that according to St. Ephrem's sermon (mentioned above), the novelty of Bardaisan's *didactic songs* was that no one had previously written this genre to be sung. As far as his psalms are concerned, he introduced greater metric regularity (most probably isosyllabic lines) to that song form.³⁰ Therefore, the contradiction between Theodor bar Koni's traditional point of view and the testimony coming from St. Ephrem is only apparent; no one required from Bardaisan to abstain from writing in other traditional forms of song.³¹

St. Ephrem himself speaks in favor of that opinion. His 65. didactic song madrāšā) from the cycle Adversus scrutatores (Against Scrutators) ends with following remark: مَكْنُو عَالَمُ مُعَانَهُ مَا اللهُ عَانَهُ مَعَانَهُ عَالَهُ مُعَانَهُ عَالَهُ مُعَانَهُ عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَ عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالًا عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالَهُ عَالًا عَ

²⁸ After *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 128. The transcription following all Syriac texts in this paper is mine.

²⁹ My translation differs from that of Harris and Mingana, "The air rejoiced in it: And there was quiet and rest, And the Lord was glorified in His wisdom, And thanks mounted to His grace" (*The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 128).

³⁰ K. E. Mcvey, Were the earliest madrāšē songs or recitations?, [in:] After Bardaisan. Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J. W. Drijvers, ed. by G. J. Reinink and A. C. Klugkist, Leuven 1999, pp. 188–190.

³¹ Kathleen E. Mcvey, Were the earliest madrāšē songs..., op. cit., p. 190.

madrašīn 'al qale dsīraw dbardaysān - [here] end the didactic songs according to the melodies of Bardaisan's songs³². If the remark comes from St. Ephrem himself, we have another proof that Bardaisan used the pentasyllabic meter in his poetical works because those madraše (XLIX–XLV) are composed in that pattern. It is enough to have a close look at the structure of the mentioned songs.³³

The accurate isosyllabic pattern could have been introduced to the Syriac poetry by Bardaisan's son, Harmonius, a continuator of his father's literary activity.³⁴ A Byzantine historian of the Church, Hermias Sozomen ($\Sigma\omega\zeta\omega\mu\nu\lambda\delta\zeta$ 'Epµí $\alpha\zeta$), writing in the first half of the 5th century, dedicated a long passage to an alleged Hellenic based influence of Harmonius on Syriac poetry and hymnody:

Άρμόνιος ὁ Βαρδησάνου παῖς: [...] διὰ τῶν παρ' Ἑλλησι λόγον ἀχθέντα, πρῶτον μέτροις καὶ νόμοις μουσικοῖς τὴν πάτριον φωνὴν ὑπαγαγεῖν, καὶ χοροῖς παραδοῦναι, [...] Ἰδὼν δὲ Ἐφραὶμ κηλουμένους τοὺς Σύρους τῷ κάλλει τῶν ὀνομάτων, καὶ τῷ ῥυθμῷ τῆς μελῳδίας, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο προσεθιζομένους ὁμοίως αὐτῷ δοξάζειν, καίπερ Ἑλλενικῆς παιδείας ἄμοιρος, ἐπέστη τῆ καταλήψει τῶν Ἀρμονίου μέτρον· καὶ πρὸς τὰ μέλη τῶν ἐκείνου γραμμάτων, ἑτέρας γραφὰς συναδούσας τοῖς ἐκκλησιαστικοῖς δόγμασι συνέθηκεν· ὁποῖα αὐτῷ πεπόνητο ἐν θείοις ὕμνοις καὶ ἐγκωμίοις ἀπαθῶν ἀνδρῶν. Ἐξ ἐκείνου τε Σύροι κατὰ τὸν νόμον τῆς Ἀρμονίου ἀδῆς τὰ τοῦ Ἐφραὶμ ψάλλουσιν.³⁵

"Bardesanes [...] and Harmonius, his son. It is related that this latter was deeply versed in Grecian erudition, and was the first to subdue his native tongue to meters and musical laws; these verses he delivered to the choirs [...] When Ephraim perceived that the Syrians were charmed with the elegance of the diction and the rhythm of the melody, he became apprehensive, lest they should imbibe the same opinions; and therefore, although he was ignorant of Grecian learning, he applied himself to the understanding of the metres of Harmonius, and composed similar poems in accordance with the doctrines of the Church, and wrought also in sacred hymns and in the praises of passionless men. From

³² Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri opera omnia وهيما وياتي التي Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri opera omnia quae exstant Graece , Syriace, Latine, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 128.

³³ "It is a pity that the Benedictine edition did not arrange them metrically so that the measure of the verse might be at once presented to the eye. After a short examination, however, it may be ascertained that these poems are written in pentesyllable verse, i.e., each line consists of five syllables" (G. Phillips, *Syriac Grammar*, op. cit., p. 192).

³⁴ "Harmonius, the son of Bardesanes, stands next in the history of this subject, both chronologically and for his successful cultivation of sacred poetry. He is reported to have studied at Athens, and to have become well acquainted with the literature of the Greeks. Some writers have stated that he indeed was the first to compose the hymns in Syriac, and they assign to him the honours, which by an almost general consent have been assigned to his father" (G. Phillips, *Syriac Grammar*, op. cit., pp. 193–194).

³⁵ Socrates et Sozomenus, accurante J.-P. Migne, Lutetiae Parisiorum 1864, p. 1089 (Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Patrologiae Greacae, 67).

that period the Syrians sang the odes of Ephraim according to the law of the ode established by Harmonius."³⁶

Sozomen most probably exaggerated the Greek influence on the Syriac poetry.³⁷ But his testimony is important because he acknowledged the fact that the Syriac versification had been by that time already developed.

As it was in the case of Bardaisan, we do not find many quotations of Harmonius' works. In his *Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan* St. Ephrem preserved a stanza composed by Harmonius in the heptasyllabic pattern:³⁸

> اة إهدَ إيضا وتحل وتحتمرا أوحَر حَج بإهدَه آسيْرا

`o <u>t</u>ešrī *`emmā* <u>d</u>šattā *`awled* lan tešrī <u>h</u>r<u>êt</u>ā *`O* October,³⁹ mother of the year,
Beget us another October!'²⁴⁰

³⁷ Cf. the critical opinion of S. Brock, "Evidently we are dealing with an example of Greek chauvinism, which preferred to see anything good in barbarian Syriac culture – such as Ephrem's poetry, some of it already translated into Greek by Sozomen's day – as ultimately derivative from Greek civilization" (S. Brock, *An Introduction to Syriac Studies*, op. cit., p. 6). "Sebastian Brock has studied Sozomen's version of events critically and come to the conclusion (agreeing with Rubens Duval in his *Littérature syriaque* [Paris, 1899]), that he very much exaggerates the Greek influence on Syriac poetry; see his 'Syriac and Greek hymnography, problems of origins', *Studia Patristica* 16 = *Texte und Untersuchungen* 129 (1985), pp. 77–81, reprinted in his *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Aldershot, 1992), ch. VI" (A. Palmer, "The Influence of Ephraim the Syrian," Los *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 2 (1999) No. 1, p. 11, n. 18). Gustav Hölscher already accused Sozomen of being wrong: Harmonius could not have created Syriac versification based on the Greek pattern because the isosyllabic Syriac prosody existed earlier (G. Hölscher, *Syrische verskunst*, Leipzig 1932, pp. 1–2).

³⁸ I have copied the text in *sertō* and provided with vocalic signs. The manuscript, written in *'estrangelā*, comes from the 5th or the 6th century (*S. Ephraim's prose refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*, of which the greater part has been transcribed from the palimpsest B.M. add. 14623 and is now first published by C. W. Mitchell, vol. 2: *The discourse called "Of Domnus" and six other writings*, London 1912, p. (3), IV). It reads as follows (*S. Ephraim's prose refutations*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 223, col. 1, vs. 14–17): Lard chart, and a cartiaro and six other writings | cartiaro bmadrāšeh means "in his didactic song"; Jam is an enclitic particle in the second position marking direct speech (M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon*, op. cit., p. 691).

³⁹ إلمان لفة المان للعام المان مان المان المان المان المان المان المان المان المان المان الما

⁴⁰ St. Ephrem explained the meaning of the stanza as follows: محمد المنتح محمد المنتح المعني المقام (*Anaw dēn 'al 'ammā dhayyē 'emar –* he speaks then of Mother of Life (*S. Ephraim's prose refutations*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 223, col. 1, vs. 18–19).

³⁶ *The ecclesiastical history of Sozomen. Comprising a history of the church from A.D.* 324 *to A.D.* 440, translated from the Greek with a memoir of the author, London 1855, p. 135.

The metrical analysis of structure of the stanza looks as follows:

The stanza is composed of regular heptasyllabic pattern with the same number of ictuses – a meter typical of Syriac poetry. That meter has been linked with the works of St. Ephrem. Therefore, it would confirm the idea of the pioneering work of Harmonius: he was supposed to have introduced the meters which St. Ephrem adopted and used in his didactic songs and poems.⁴¹

The St. Ephrem's biography compiled in the 6th century mentioned his battle against the teachings of Bardaisan and his followers, as well as (indirectly) the saint's struggle with the influence of Harmonius.⁴²

Conclusion

The early period of development of Syriac poetry was characterized by the use of heterosyllabic rhythmical units with a metrical pattern based mainly on three ictuses. The strophic poems, most probably isosyllabic (with pentasyllabic pattern), have been introduced most likely by Bardaisan. Harmonius, his son, popularized the heptasyllabic pattern and St. Ephrem made good use of the achievements of both his predecessors. It was also St. Ephrem who influenced the further development of Greek poetry with its characteristic use of the isosyllabic pattern.⁴³

⁴¹ S. Ephraim's prose refutations, op. cit., vol. 2, p. cxxviii.

⁴² بهتما المنابع المحيم المحيل المحيم المحيم المحيم معل المحيم معل المحيم معل المحيم معل المحيم المحي محيم المحيم ال محيم المحيم محيم المحيم ال

⁴³ "But it was through Ephraim that the forms of Syriac poetry came to influence those of Greek poetry, not through Bardesanes and Harmonios. Whatever these may have learned from the Greeks, it was not isosyllabic metres, which were probably first used in Greek in the late fourth century. Bardesanes may have invented stanzaic poetry, but Romanos derived his models from Ephraim" (A. Palmer, *The Influence of Ephraim*, op. cit., p. 12).